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**KAZAKHSTAN**

## FIRST PERSON

# A Study Tour Yields New Initiatives

### **USAID alumna organizes camp for rural children**



*English Camp participants and the Camp organizer, Community Connections alumna, Ms. Zhakupova (second from right). Photo: ACCELS*

***An NGO leader uses her skills gained during a USAID study tour to raise funds and organize an English-language study camp for the disadvantaged children in her village.***

A USAID study tour helped Anara Zhakupova of the Community Foundation for Continuing Education in Pervomayskiy village, North-East Kazakhstan, gain both professional contacts and skills for the development of her organization. Since returning home, Anara has used the new skills to raise funds for her NGO and her U.S. contacts to develop and implement an English-language study camp for the children in her village.

Anara is typical of many participants of the USAID Community Connections program. A USAID study tour in the U.S. in April 2006 provided her with an opportunity to study a variety of topics important to NGO leaders. Training sessions in *fundraising*, practical visits, and discussions with organizations such as a Tucson group that runs a camp for at-risk children helped Ms. Zhakupova to develop a

competitive grant proposal for a summer camp for children and receive funding from a U.S. Embassy grant program. With this funding, she organized a two-year language and cultural-exchange weekend and summer school for 25 rural children from poor families.

In addition to the fundraising skills, Anara also developed an ongoing professional exchange of resources and experience during her trip to the U.S. As part of the study program, Anara lived with a family of Bill and Barbara Chinworth in Tucson, Arizona and has stayed in touch with them ever since. With the help of her host family, Ms. Zhakupova recruited two retired teachers from Arizona to come to Pervomaiskiy and teach at a two-week intensive English-language camp in summer 2008. Building on the example of the USAID study tour program, Anara arranged for the American teachers to live with host families during their stay in Pervomaiskiy and experience life in rural Kazakhstan.

Due to the success of the program, Ms. Zhakupova's organization is working to secure funding to conduct the camp every summer, so that more children for underprivileged families can expand their English-language skills and gain understanding of the American culture. Anara is also planning to include rural English teachers in the program, so that the program can be replicated independently of her NGO.